

Amsterdam 28 December 2004

I was very pleasantly surprised when I arrived in Amsterdam and Dirk was there to meet me at the airport. But I felt bad that I wasn't wearing my Buteyko tie for the first time, so Dirk had some trouble recognizing me. The flight left London late, and as British luck would have it, I could have managed to travel by metro and train and still made the flight with time to spare, thereby saving lots of money.



Dirk took me to dinner and then left me at the hotel. I spent about 3 hours walking around Amsterdam, mainly around residential areas that night. I immediately fell in love with the place. It is quiet, peaceful and neat. Every now and then you see a family: mum, dad and baby on back, cycling quietly along the peaceful streets. There were Christmas decorations in all the windows, and people don't seem to draw curtains much here, so you almost feel like you're part of the families. Amsterdam has a wonderful quiet charm that totally appeals to me.



I just wandered anywhere my fancy took me, and then after two hours stopped to try to find exactly where I was. Unfortunately the names of most of the roads had been left off the map I had with me, unbeknown to me! If I hadn't stumbled across an open Shell garage in the middle of Boxing day night, I might have frozen to death on one of the streets of Amsterdam! With the new map I bought at the garage and my Soviet Compass, I found my way home again.



The four Dutch practitioners including Masha Kotosouva, rocked up at Dirk's practice for a meeting that lasted pretty much the whole day. It was very successful and gave us all plenty of food for thought, followed by some great Dutch food for the belly in the evening. The food here, particularly the bread and pastries are just fantastic and reminded me of Russia. The food of London is now just a distant nightmare.

Today Dirk collected me for a meeting with a PR person wanting to do an article on Buteyko for the press. She is very intelligent and very competent and also very well connected. I also met Dirk's family and left the children the second boomerang I brought with me.



This afternoon and evening I spent the rest of my time here exploring the city by foot. I also toured through the famous red light district, where my map and compass eventually came in very handy, since I kept getting distracted by..... distractions and, therefore, disorientated. I suspect Victor could come up with a great cartoon of me fumbling through the red light district with a map and compass. This area of Amsterdam is very well patronized, and the girls must be doing a roaring trade. I also peeked in to some of the empty rooms through the window, and I have to say, it all looks very clean and modern inside. The girls are safe and warm behind those glass doors, and the customer gets to see what he's buying. I think it's a very good model for red-light districts.

Although the tram stops outside my hotel and again at the railway station, Dirk absolutely insisted on coming all the way in to Amsterdam to take me to the station. I have never in my life experienced such incredible hospitality as I have from these Dutch practitioners, especially Dirk.
